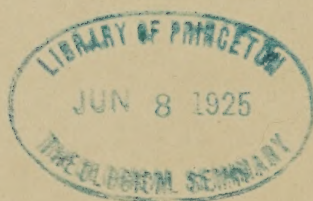


RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION
AND THE
AMERICAN PUBLIC SCHOOL

B. F. LORANCE, M. D.

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THIS LITTLE VOLUME IS REVERENTLY
DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY
OF THE
AUBURN PUBLIC SCHOOLS
WHICH, FOR MANY YEARS, HAVE BEEN A CONSTANT
INSPIRATION TO THE AUTHOR

PREFACE

Just at this time, more persistently and in louder tones than ever, the charge is being made that the public schools of our land are Godless.

The peoples of the Earth, throughout history, have had their religions and other systems for the training of their youth. Many of those agencies have been truly great. The purpose of this little volume is to sustain the contention that, of all the institutions past or present ever designed to build into the lives of man's offspring the attributes of God and the tenets of Christ, the one which stands preeminent is the AMERICAN PUBLIC SCHOOL.

B. F. LORANCE.

Auburn, Nebr.
October, 1924.

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RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION AND THE AMERICAN PUBLIC SCHOOL

I

EDUCATION AT PUBLIC EXPENSE, AN AMERICAN INSTITUTION

OF the many features which cause the United States of America to stand out in sharp contrast with other nations, there is no institution more note worthy than our public schools. The idea that a state is in duty bound to furnish educational facilities to all its youth alike, at public expense, may be said to be distinctly American, for in no other land does just such a custom prevail.

The thought that "All men are created equal and endowed with certain inalienable rights, among which are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" was born in the United States of America. But that thought is no more distinctly American, no more vital, than is the thought that the nation which would hope to endure permanently can make sure of realizing that hope only by providing for its youth universal education at public expense.

II

UNFRIENDLY CRITICISM

It might seem strange that it should be so, yet this, our system of universal public education has always been the object of unfriendly criticism from certain quarters, but, probably, at no time in the history of our nation has there been such a flood of censure along this line as at the present moment. In recent months long and numerous magazine articles have been written and books published all setting forth many startling statements; such as, that more than half of our school children will steal, will lie, cheat and do many other things not in keeping with upright, Christ like living. In fact the authors of these books and magazine articles, with much care and labor, have applied tests to our youngsters and have made up long tables of statistics to prove their point that our public schools are filled with thieves, liars, deceivers, and various other kinds of crooked individuals. But the thing which is most significant is the fact that the purpose of all this effort is to bring an indictment against the American system of universal free instruction; to carry to the minds of the people of our land the thought that the condition of affairs alluded to, exists primarily because the young folks in our public schools receive no religious training; no instruction touching such cardinal virtues as honesty, truthfulness, fair dealing, and the other nobler attributes which go to make up sterling Christian character.

If the contentions set forth in such articles as have been appearing in recent months in the magazine, Good Housekeeping, in the Literary Digest of March 15th, 1924,

and in the book written by Walter S. Athearn and published by Geo. H. Doran Co.—If such contentions really have a substantial foundation, then truly every good citizen in this fair land may well stand aghast.

A few quotations from the articles and books referred to, follow:—

"The public schools in which our children are trained are Godless."

"Acknowledgment of God is practically barred from the public school system of the United States."

"All religion has been tossed out through the door of the public schools."

"It seems that it is not the business of the public schools to teach the children the plain and simple morals of every day living; the result is the unparalleled growth of crime of all sorts in the United States."

"Morals, somehow, have dropped out along the road of educational progress."

"Tests show that more than one-half of our American school children have an unethical outlook on life; that more than one-half of them will cheat, lie, and steal."

When magazine writers and the makers of books will go to so much trouble, will spend their own, supposedly precious time, using up large amounts of magazine and book space, while consuming the valuable hours of the many thousands of people who may read their offerings, the purpose being to indict the public school system of America, sustaining their contentions by such thoughts as cited in the above quotations, then it certainly becomes the duty of every individual who is imbued with a feeling of loyalty to our Stars and Stripes to pause, to reflect deeply, and to put forth a serious effort to subject the entire situation to a searching analysis. Such a procedure necessarily involves the getting down to basic laws and first principles.

III

PSYCHOLOGY OF THE CHILD

To such magazine writers and authors, who have been so unfortunate as never to have had the opportunity, afforded by close contact, to study first hand, that most interesting of all things, child nature, the suggestion is here kindly offered that it might be well to spend at least a few hours reading some recognized text book on psychology, pedagogy, or child development.

From such a source many interesting facts may be learned, basic truths familiar to every tyro in the merest rudiments of pedagogy and child life. A partial list of these basic truths follows:—

(1) Every infant, when it is born into the world is possessed of only the lower or animal propensities, all the higher or spiritual faculties, at that time being at the zero point.

(2) Starting at this zero point which obtains at birth, the higher or spiritual attributes of the child's nature develop and unfold very slowly, the animal or lower propensities always strongly predominating in childhood and youth, the higher or spiritual qualities gaining the ascendancy only in the late decades of life.

(3) The struggle between the lower and the higher attributes of man is the fiercest of all combats, the higher elements not by any means being always the victor, at any age, even under the most favorable circumstances.

(4) This struggle between the upper and the lower cohorts in man's nature is life long, incessant, terminating only when death has closed the scene.

(5) After the home, the church, society, and our public schools, all cooperating in their efforts, have labored incessantly at top speed for a long period of time, using all agencies available in an attempt to aid the child in subjugating the baser propensities of his nature, while striving to bring the higher attributes into the ascendancy, failure often crowns the endeavor.

(6) The child, even several years after its birth, is a stranger to reason, judgment, perception, honesty, veracity, charity; coming into the possession of these attributes only to a limited degree in childhood and, then, only after the most diligent endeavor on the part of all those concerned in its development.

The foregoing basic truths so familiar to every parent and to all others having the most rudimentary knowledge of child nature, may be boiled down into simple language, thus:—no child was ever born into the world, but that would fib, cheat, filch, and do many other regrettable things until after a long process of most careful effort it has been trained away from such tendencies.

In the light of all this, what should be said of that individual who would charge all these inborn weaknesses of the child's nature to the free public schools of America?

But, getting away from the fundamental facts of psychology and pedagogy, let us turn our attention to another field.

IV

HISTORICAL DATA

AN effort has been made to prove that, "*The public schools of America are Godless.*" That, "*All religion has been tossed out through the door of the public school.*" That, "*Morals, somehow, have dropped out along the road of educational progress.*" In view of the effort mentioned, it seems proper that one should direct the attention of some folks to a few facts of history extending back over the last four or five centuries.

(1) In the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, during the days of witchcraft in England, more than 30,000 people were burned at the stake; and the folks who put those innocent people to death in that cruel fashion were ardently religious, much given to prayer, in fact, called upon God to aid them in their orgies of human destruction.

(2) As ardently religious were those high dignitaries, who, during the days of the Spanish Inquisition, put to death more than 340,000 people in the name of God, 32,000 of the number being burned at the stake; and this vast number of innocent creatures were thus cruelly executed for no other reason than that they dared to express a religious belief not in harmony with that of their executors.

(3) It was intensely religious, praying men, who, in the name of God, threw John Bunyan into prison, and kept him there more than twelve years simply because his religious views were out of harmony with those of the high and very pious clergy of that day.

(4) It was men, reputed to be very Godly, and of the most ardent religious tendencies, who summoned Martin

Luther before the Diet of Worms, and, there, cruelly persecuted him solely because his religious views were not in accord with their own.

V

MORAL EVOLUTION

It is not meant, here, to strenuously preach the doctrine of evolution, but who can deny, that, in the matter of spiritual and moral uplift, there has been, even in the last few centuries, evolution of a decided type; and, who, excepting a certain select few, would dare to deny, that universal education at public expense, has had a large share in blasting the miserable darkness of bygone days, and thus aiding in the great upward march?

Certainly, some of the children in our public schools will, under temptation, tell falsehoods, will take things not belonging to them, and will cheat. Of course they will do such things; they were born with such tendencies; every one having the slightest acquaintance with child nature knows that; but who can imagine an individual, one who has completed a twelve year course in any American public school, and has reached the status of full grown manhood—who can imagine such an individual taking some poor old innocent woman out and burning her at the stake, simply because she did not agree with his religious beliefs?

Lest the paragraphs, which have immediately preceded, might appear to have been said in a spirit of derision or sacrilege, it seems proper that it should be here stated that the author of this little treatise is a staunch believer in the tenets of Christ, is an elder in the Presbyterian church, the father of six children, all of whom are adherents to the Christian religion; and, if he had a thousand children he would want them all to be followers of the Lowly Nazarene.

However, he would wish all those children to be one hundred per. cent. in their attendance at the public school, as he would implicitly trust that institution to do its full share, in cooperation with the home and the church in training those children to be such followers.

As pupil, teacher, parent and board of education member, the author has spent his entire life in close contact with the public school. It is in the light of this experience that this full confidence is here expressed.

When future ages shall have dispelled the mists, so that all men may come to see clearly, and to regard, not creed, but real worth as the crucial test, then the American public school will stand out in its true light.

VI

SACRED HISTORY

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

IN the foregoing paragraphs reference has been made to a number of incidents familiar to all people having merely a speaking acquaintance with profane history. Here, for the edification of some people, who have made it their business to prove that there are liars and thieves among our children in the public schools, it might be mentioned that sacred history affords some facts having a bearing upon the situation under consideration.

Nearly 4000 years ago the following words were written and recorded in the Holy Bible in the 20th chapter of Exodus:—

“THOU SHALT NOT STEAL.”

“THOU SHALT NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS.”

“THOU SHALT NOT COVET.”

These injunctions were issued to full grown men and women, not to school children. There must have been some thieves and liars in those days or else such commands would not have been put forth—Yes, and every one with the least scrap of prophetic vision knows that there will be plenty of need for just such injunctions a million years from now, when the hills have all fallen down and rolled into the sea; and the pyramids of Egypt have crumbled to dust and have been blown away upon the sands of the desert. Why? Because man was created with that dual nature from which there is no escape until the last trump shall sound.

VII

A DIVINITY OVER ALL

LET us all agree that there is a Divinity ruling the Universe; that that Divinity created the world for the sole purpose that it might be the abode of man. By that course of reasoning, then, the very greatest—the most sacred institution upon this planet is the home—the home where dwell together, father, mother, love, and little ones. Yes, let it be agreed that this world was made for man; that man was created in the image of God; then, certainly, that agency which can take the children of man and build into the lives of those children the attributes of God, is little less divine than God himself. Remember, it is the purpose of this effort to sustain the contention that the American System of Public Education is just such an agency.

VIII

AN ORDINARY AMERICAN PUBLIC SCHOOL

LET us go to one of those institutions, the public school in some fair sized town any where in the United States of America, and let us see if we can ascertain what is going on there. We will assume that it is in the morning of the first Monday in September. In order not to scatter our efforts we will confine our observations to the primary department.

IX

THE ATTRIBUTE, STABILITY

As the bell rings for assemblage, forty children, five years of age, enter the primary room. As the hands of the clock point to the hour of nine, the teacher taps the bell at which signal all these little folks are seated. Certain exercises are gone through with for a period, when, exactly at a definite time specified in the program, the children are dismissed to return to their homes. As punctually as they were assembled and dismissed on the first day, they are assembled and dismissed on the second day; exactly so for the third, the fourth, and all the days of that week, that month, and, in fact for every day of that entire year.

During the second year of the school life of these children, this same exactness as to the time of their assemblage, their recitations, and their dismissal is adhered to; the same for the third and fourth years, in fact for all the years until the twelve year course has been completed and they have graduated from the high school. Throughout this entire period their teachers have used all laudable means to induce these children never to be tardy or absent.

Well, what about this punctuality and regularity as applied to these children during their twelve years of attendance at this institution, an American Public School? Why, there is very much about it. One of the outstanding attributes of God is regularity, as is evidenced everywhere in nature; the revolution of the Earth upon its axis and in its course around the sun; the coming and going of the seasons; the budding of the trees and the falling of the leaves, all of which being accomplished through the centuries without

the least variation. The regularity practiced by these children during the twelve years of their school life has lead them, irresistibly, to conform to one of God's basic laws, and has, as irresistibly impelled them to adore regularity, solidity, stability, truth, in fact all things substantial; and to hate the irregular, shoddy, unsubstantial things and practices of life. The building of the habit of regularity into the lives of these children is to that extent the building of God into their lives. To deny the truth of the foregoing statement is to deny the existence of all the natural laws of growth and development.

X

THE ATTRIBUTE, TRUTH

ASIDE from the practice of, and the putting of themselves into conformity with that attribute of the Deity, regularity, the lives of these children, while in the primary grade and throughout the twelve years of their school career are filled with features of the most interesting and worth-while type. At the very outset of their school life they begin to deal with facts—with truths. They learn, for example, that 2 and 2 make four. As progress is made, they come to deal with the more complex but unerring truths and laws of mathematics, language, chemistry, physics, and the other sciences, as well as coming into contact with the fixed facts of history, literature, and the other curricular subjects; the entire procedure being one continuous, diligent search for, and the coming into contact with truth.

What agency or institution can more effectually build into the lives of individuals a love for that noble attribute of God, truth, while thus instilling a hatred for that which is false—what institution can more effectually do that thing than the institution which, for a period of twelve years systematically affords an opportunity for truth seeking and truth contact?

XI

HONESTY

THE attributes, stability, veracity, honesty, in fact all the nobler traits of man are so related one to the other as to be inseparable, hence the process which weaves into the character of an individual one of these qualities, from the very nature of things, implants them all. The child that, with unerring regularity, for a period of twelve years, is continuously brought into contact with truth, necessarily has developed within his soul a tendency to be honest.

In each of the rooms during the twelve years of experience in its public school life, the child is in constant contact with truth, sincerity, and purity of action along all lines. In the entire program there is no sham, no false note, no shoddy contrivance, no artificial garb, no strained formality, nothing but straightforward, earnest endeavor, in an atmosphere where there is constant good will and kindly attitude of teacher toward pupils, pupils toward teacher, and pupil toward pupil, all so balanced as to irresistibly engender respect for law, order, and constituted authority.

Then there are the sweet songs the children sing, the pure sentiments in the books they read; the refining influence of the cleanly appearance of teacher and associates, together with the orderly, wholesome arrangement of the entire surroundings. In short, in this institution, the American public school, whose business, primarily, is to build character while incidentally imparting knowledge, the whole procedure of weaving the attributes of God and the tenets of Christ into the life of the child is carried forward so effectually, so naturally, that the child is wholly unconscious of the process.

XII

METHODS IN THE LOWER GRADES TEACHING MORALS BY EXAMPLE AND SUGGESTION

FOLKS who are holding to the thought that, "*Religion, somehow, has dropped out along the road of educational progress*" should take a day off, at some convenient time, and visit, for a few hours at least, the lower grades in any public school in our land. In addition to the features noted in preceding paragraphs, a close inspection of the charts, primers, and reading books used by the children should be very interesting and instructive. It will be found that these charts, primers, and reading books are literally filled with the pictures of birds, animals of all kinds, domestic and wild, butterflies, flowers, trees and others of God's creatures; and this reading material is all so arranged as to take the children out into the fields and woods on imaginary excursions, where all these animals, represented as dressed up like real human beings, are conversing with each other always in the most courteous and kindly fashion, the baser traits of the animals never being alluded to. In these pleasant, gentle, imaginary conversations, which the animals are represented as carrying on among themselves, the traits and habits of each are set forth in a fashion which the children can easily understand.

Could there possibly be any more effective way of leading the child to have an adoration for the Deity than to bring that child into close contact with all those things created by the Deity? Again, could it be possible to devise any better plan for inculcating those noble attributes of Christ, love, purity of heart, kindness, gentleness, regard for the interests of others, and all the other traits recognized as essential in the make up of a high grade Christian character?

In the training of the children in our public schools, the whole procedure in the first three grades rests upon that basic law, well established, that the child at that early age is largely a creature of imitation, that it learns, not by precept, but by example; that it will unconsciously act like and become like those things which it sees and with which it comes in contact. Hence this scheme of bringing these little folks into close association with nature and the animal world.

It will, doubtless, be amusing to teachers and all others who are familiar with procedures in vogue in our public schools, that, in a treatise of this kind, concrete examples should be paraded in the way of extracts taken from the child literature used in the lower grades. All the folks familiar with the customs used in the schools for the training of our little ones, may think the following quotations and little stories wholly uncalled for. All such are asked to remember that there are people who hold to the view that our public schools are, "GODLESS;" that "IT SEEMS THAT IT IS NOT THE BUSINESS OF THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS TO TEACH THE CHILDREN THE PLAIN AND SIMPLE MORALS OF EVERY DAY LIVING." It is for the edification of such folks, that the following excerpts are here set forth. The quotations are from little books in actual use in the lower grades of a school with which the author is familiar, and are such as may be gleaned from the literature in use in the lower grades of any public school anywhere in our land.

"I love little pussy,
Her coat is so warm;
And if I don't tease her
She'll do me no harm.

"I will not pull her tail,
Nor drive her away,

But pussy and I
Very gently will play.

"I will pat little pussy
And then she will purr,
And thus show her thanks
For my kindness to her."

"Little red bird in the tree,
In the tree,
In the tree,
Little red bird in the tree,
Sing a song for me.

"Sing about the roses
On the garden wall;
Sing about the bird swing
In the tree top tall."

"There's a merry brown thrush,
Sitting up in the tree,
He's singing to me,
He's singing to me,
And what does he say,
Little girl, little boy?
'Oh, the world's running over with joy
Don't you hear? Don't you see?
Hush. Look In my tree
I'm as happy as happy can be.'

"And the brown thrush keeps singing,
'A nest, do you see,
And five eggs, hid by me in the juniper tree?"

Don't meddle. Don't touch,
Little girl, little boy,
Now I'm glad, now I'm free;
And always shall be,
If you never bring sorrow to me.'

"So the merry brown thrush sings away in the tree,
To you and to me, to you and to me.

And he sings all the day, 'Little girl, little boy
Oh, the world's running over with joy,
But long it won't be
Don't you hear? Don't you see?
Unless we're as good as can be?'"

"How dreary would the meadows be
In the pleasant summer light,
Suppose there wasn't a bird to sing,
And suppose the grass was white.

"And dreary would the garden be,
With all its flowery trees,
Suppose there were no butterflies,
And suppose there were no bees."

The foregoing rhymes are merely examples of the endless number of like verses with which all the books for little public school children are teeming. The purpose of these delightful lines is to engender, in the heart of the child, love, gentleness, kindly consideration for all created things, including, of course, all his associates. Aside from the rhymes with their ennobling sentiments, all these primers are filled to overflowing with short stories in prose, designed to kindle in the child breast all the nobler attributes. A few of these stories are here submitted in abridged form.

JOHN AND THE WATCH

John was passing along the road one day when he spied a fine gold watch lying upon the ground. Now, thought John, I can have a fine watch of my own; so he slyly carried it home and hid it away until bed time, when he placed it under his pillow; but as soon as he had gone to bed, he could hear the watch ticking, ticking, ticking, and to John it seemed to say, "John, John, a thief," "John, John, a thief"; and this constant ticking kept John awake until nearly morning. When John awoke he hurried to his mother, told her the entire story and asked his mother to help him find the owner. When the watch had been returned to the man who lost it, John was very happy.

ELLEN AND THE HAZELNUTS

Ellen was a little girl whose parents were very poor. The frosty nights of autumn had come, but Ellen's father did not have the money to buy her a pair of shoes, so she had to go to school bare foot; this caused the other children, who were comfortably clad, to laugh in a fun making way, thus very much saddening the heart of little Ellen. Learning of this, Ellen's father told her that if she would go to a patch not far away and gather hazel nuts on Saturday and sell them for enough money to pay half on a pair of shoes, he would furnish the other half, so that she might have the new pair for the next week. Accordingly Ellen worked most of the day Saturday, filling a good sized bag, which she left in the patch. When her father returned in the evening from his day's labor he and Ellen went for the nuts, only to find the sack empty. So Ellen, heavy hearted, had to go to school again on Monday without shoes. She there told her school mates of her misfortune in having some one take the nuts, which she had labored so hard all day Saturday to gather. A neighbor boy, Thomas, who was the

guilty one to take the nuts, upon hearing Ellen's sad tale, became penitent to the extent that he went to the home of a farmer near by and engaged himself to pick up potatoes after school each evening until he had earned enough money to make up to Ellen the value of the hazel nuts she had gathered. As soon as Thomas had received his pay for the work he had done he hurried over to Ellen's home, made a confession of his wrong doing and gave the money to Ellen; then all were happy, for Ellen came to school the next day with her new shoes.

THE ORANGE MAN

An orange man was passing through a village. His oranges were in two baskets hanging over the back of the horse he was riding. When he came to the tavern he dismounted and asked the proprietor of the inn to point out to him some honest boy among a group of school children near by—a boy who could be safely trusted to guard the horse and oranges while the owner should eat his dinner. Accordingly the proprietor pointed to a boy named Charles. Charles was called and the horse and oranges placed in his keeping, he being promised an orange for his trouble. In a few minutes Edward came along and asked Charles to give him an orange, to which request Charles replied that he could not do that, as the oranges did not belong to him. Then Edward tried to push Charles aside and take one by force, but Charles resisted; whereupon Edward attempted to pass behind the heels of the horse to the basket on the other side. In this attempt, Edward disturbed the horse which gave him a vicious kick, sending him sprawling upon the ground. At Edward's cries of pain the people came rushing out of the tavern to learn what could be the matter. When a man, who had been standing near, told how it had all occurred, the orange man said to Charles, "My son, I promised to give you an orange for your trouble in watching my horse

and oranges, but now I shall give you a hat full, because you were true and honest." But Charles said, "No, I earned only one and that's all I'll take." Then the orange man took Charles' hat and filled it with oranges. Charles took the oranges offering many thanks, but said that he would keep only one for himself and give the others to the children near by who were his playmates. When Charles had finished distributing his oranges among his mates there was great rejoicing among the group and much praise for Charles because of the courage he had displayed in doing his duty; but Edward, in much pain and with shame on his face limped down the street without any orange and with every one pointing him out as a thief and a sneak.

XIII

TEACHING BY PRECEPT

ONE could compile a large volume made up of selections culled from the many types of primary readers used in our public schools, the aim of such literature being to inculcate in the soul of the child, in a manner wholly unconscious to him, all the noble traits of Christian character. This, the only rational plan of building character in early childhood is followed out through all the twelve grades; but, as soon as the child has reached the age when such will be effective, teaching by precept is added to the program, and carried out on a larger scale from year to year as the child advances, as may be evidenced by the few selections clipped from the vast store filling the reading books in all the grades.

"How can a little child be merry
In snowy, blowy January?

"By each day doing what is best;
By thinking, working for the rest;
So can a little child be merry
In snowy, blowy January."

"And now at last the sun
Is going down behind the wood,
And I am very happy,
For I know that I've been good."

"Speak gently, it is better far
To rule by love than fear;

Speak gently, let no harsh word mar
The good you might do here."

"Be you to others kind and true,
As you'd have others be to you."

"Plant a loving thought
In all that you may do,
And that seed will blossom
Into love for you."

"Happy as a robin,
Gentle as a dove,
That's the sort of little child
Every one will love."

"Do all the good you can
To all the people you can,
In all the ways you can,
Just as long as you can."

"Little gifts are precious,
If a loving heart
Helps the busy fingers,
As they do their part."

"One gentle word that we may speak,
Or one kind, loving deed,
May, though a trifle, poor and weak,
Prove like a tiny seed;
And who can tell what good may spring
From such a very little thing?"

"Love the beautiful,
Seek out the true,
Wish for the good,
And the best do."

"Beautiful hands are those that do
Work that is earnest, brave, and true,
Moment by moment, the long day through.
Beautiful feet are those that go
On kindly errands to and fro—
Down humblest ways, if God wills it so.
Beautiful faces are those that wear—
It matters little if dark or fair—
Whole-souled honesty printed there."

"Have you had a kindness shown?
Pass it on.
'Twas not given for you alone,
Pass it on.
Let it travel down the years,
Let it wipe another's tears,
Till in heaven the deed appears,
Pass it on."

"Four things a man must learn to do,
If he would make his calling true,—
To think without confusion clearly,
To love his fellow men sincerely,
To act from honest motives purely,
To trust in God and heaven securely."

"Howe're it be, it seems to me,
'Tis only noble to be good;
Kind hearts are more than coronets,
And simple faith than Norman blood."

"We search the world for truth, we cull
The good, the true, the beautiful,
From graven stone and written scroll—
From all old flower-fields of the soul;
"And, weary seekers for the best,
We come back laden from our quest
To find all that the sages said
Is in the book our mothers read."

"If I can stop one heart from breaking,
I shall not live in vain;
If I can ease one life the aching,
Or cool one pain,
Or help one fainting robin
Unto his nest again,
I shall not live in vain."

XIV

SOME TESTS OF EFFICIENCY

IN any locality, if one should wish to take some step which might afford an opportunity to form a correct opinion as to the character of the public schools, the efficiency of the school management, and the true worth of the teaching force, there could be found no better procedure than to make a visit to the school building or buildings at the hour of 8.15 to 9.15 any morning.

Upon making such a visit at the hour indicated, if the management is high class, it will be observed that, when the gong sounds at 8.30, the doors will swing open, at which time the pupils will begin entering the building, all quietly passing to their respective rooms and taking their seats, there being no whispering, talking, or jostling in the halls or in any of the rooms.

Again, in addition to the fine discipline prevailing everywhere, in the halls and schools rooms, on the school grounds, and upon the streets as the pupils journey to and from school, if all is well, it will be noted that there is an air of business on all sides, all the rooms being filled to their capacity; the seventh and eighth grades will be large, and the high school building taxed to the limit to take care of the attendance. These facts about the grammar grades and the high school should be regarded as most significant, since it is possible to keep these upper grade pupils in attendance only when the school is made attractive and high class in all respects.

Many things happen in every community every day in the week, but, of all the events which can possibly happen any-

where, the passing of the children and young people on their way to and from school is the most interesting. This is true for many reasons. First, because the young people engaged in this act are the very joy and hope of the homes from which they come, embodying all that makes life worth living for father and mother; constituting the brain, bone and sinew—the very foundation upon which the nation must place its sole dependence a generation hence.

This event is most interesting because these young people are a sure index of the type of the homes from which they come; a quiet, respectful, orderly bearing on their part proclaims to the world that they come from homes where abide a love for law and order, and all other qualities which go to make up the highest type of citizenship. The manner of their journeying homeward sets forth in terms more forceful than any words can tell, the character of the school attended; if, on their part there is noisy disorder, vulgarity, the pushing of pedestrians from the side walk, and other forms of rowdyism, one would not need to visit the school in order to learn what is going on there; for, children exhibiting disorderly conduct on the streets can come only from a disorderly school. Any young person who receives training in a public school which is provided with the best equipment, with a high class teaching force, under able supervision, becomes the possessor of an asset which will be of the highest value when the school days are over and the duties of life are entered upon.

In this connection it should not be forgotten that any community which, to any extent or degree lowers its school standards, to that same extent and degree will cause itself to be shunned by the better class of teachers, and will send out from its public schools, into the great battle of life, young people to struggle on under the heaviest of all handicaps—a shoddy education.

Certainly every one should stand for the practice of the

most rigid economy in the management of all school affairs, but it should be remembered that our children and young people journey through this golden period of their school days just once. It is most vital, therefore, that they spend those young days in a school provided with the best possible equipment, instructed by a superior teaching corps, all under the directing guidance of able, first class supervision.

XV

THE SUPERINTENDENT

It certainly is worthwhile that all should have clear ideas as to just what things constitute proper guide posts in determining the efficiency of any school system, yet it is equally important to have correct standards by which to measure the worth of a superintendent.

There are those who seem to think the true test of high merit in any school superintendent is, among other things, that he should be a hale fellow well met upon the street corners and in the places of business, and, possibly a high man on the golf links. Measured by such standards, all the men who now hold high rank in the school world would be utter failures. The fact of the matter is that a public school superintendent is paid his salary to do just three things. First, he should know intimately the school work to be done. Second, he, and he only should select the teaching force to do that work. Third, he must see that that teaching force does that work.

The public school superintendent who functions ably in these three respects is an ace, and fills the measure of success to overflowing, if, in addition it can be said that he is a clean, upstanding, Christian gentleman. Any worthy superintendent is willing to have himself and the schools he supervises judged by the standards mentioned in the foregoing paragraphs? Really, are any other standards worthy of consideration?

XVI

THE TEACHER IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

ASIDE from the home, with its saintly influence of mother, the most potent factor for good in any neighborhood is the teacher in the public school. Because of her training she embodies in her personality all the ennobling attributes of a sterling character; custom and the law require that she should be such an individual. The mere contact of the child with such a personality is of priceless value. Money is powerless to render adequate recompense to the well prepared, devoted, conscientious teacher. To her is due not only the paltry dollars paid; there is due in addition the whole hearted lasting gratitude of every member of the community in which she labors. Aside from the, at best, inadequate salary and lasting gratitude, there are due in addition all other things,—a kindly, helpful, charitable, not too exacting attitude on the part of all her patrons.

The function of the teacher is to deal with children—immature creatures in which all the baser propensities predominate, while all the higher attributes are dormant, and are yet to be developed and brought into the ascendancy. The nature of the task is such that the very best that the most excellent teacher can do with any group of children is to get fairly good results. To get results which are wholly satisfactory is an utter impossibility. When the teacher has finished her day's work, or the work of the week, or the term, of all those who might express dissatisfaction with her efforts, she is the most dissatisfied.

When the term opens in the fall, the teacher is inspired with a spirit of bounding optimism; has set up her ideals, her high standards; she enters upon her duties happy and

all aglow with righteous enthusiasm; but before the first day's labor is ended, by virtue of the fact that she has been dealing with rollicking immature creatures, all her ideals and standards are trailing in the dust, while her enthusiasm and optimism have fallen well nigh to the zero point.

In some respects the teacher may be likened to the painter or sculptor; all three are builders; the teacher, of character; the painter, of pictures; the sculptor, of statuary; but in many respects the work of the teacher differs from that of the painter or sculptor.

The painter or sculptor, when the day's work is ended, can stand back, pull himself up very straight, fold his arms and, with a feeling of the utmost satisfaction in his heart, behold the results of his handiwork; he can even call his friends in to to exult with him, to congratulate him, while they all look upon this visible, this tangible evidence of his skill. Why not? The painter or sculptor, in the first place, has his ideals all set up in his own mind; he labors with materials—brush, paint, canvas, or chisel and stone; tangible, visible things, over which he has perfect control.

It is not so with the teacher, except that in the beginning of her day's work she has her ideals all set up in her mind; but, all day long she labors with that invisible, intangible thing, child nature, in an endeavor to build that other invisible intangible thing, character. When the day's labor is ended and the children have departed, with nothing tangible or visible to bear testimony to her laudable efforts, with high ideals shattered, lonely and in silence, tired in body and broken in spirit, she slumps down into her chair to prepare the next day's work.

For the teacher in the public school, who, by virtue of the work she does, stands next to the sainted mother in the home, let us all resolve that the remuneration shall be ample, and that there shall ever be entertained in the hearts of all, the fullest measure of respect and kindly consideration.

XVII

THE BOARD OF EDUCATION

A very important factor anywhere is the Board of Education. Upon the personnel of the board depends, largely, the success of the school. The board has many duties to perform, chief of which is the choosing of a superintendent.

Having used wisdom in selecting a superintendent, and having placed that superintendent in complete charge of the plant, the most serviceable thing that the members of the Board can then do is to retire into the background and refrain from tampering with the machinery.

XVIII

THE BIBLE IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

A very good man in a certain town holds family worship in his home every evening when the day's work is done. The Bible is read and prayer is offered to the Deity. The mayor and all the members of the council in that town might think the custom of that good man a most excellent one; they might even earnestly wish that the same thing could be done in every home in that neighborhood, but that town council would not think of passing an ordinance compelling every home in that jurisdiction to adopt such a custom. To do such a thing would be to assume authority not delegated by law.

The author of these pages has served as member of a board of education for more than twenty-five years. On one occasion, while visiting the schools, one of the teachers was found opening her school, every morning, with prayer and the reading of the Bible. All the members of our board were fine Christian gentlemen; they all thought the custom of that teacher most admirable, but they could not go over to the teacher on the other side of the hall and request her to do likewise; nor could they, as a board of education, make a regulation requiring the other members of the teaching force to adopt such a custom.

For a town council, a board of education, or any other body to attempt to legislate on such a matter would be to go back to the methods in vogue during the Dark Ages. The Pilgrim Fathers left Europe and came to these shores for no other reason than that the rulers of those days insisted upon passing laws setting forth the manner in which they

should worship God. In this land, those Pilgrim Fathers established a government, and wrote into the Constitution of that government the clause guaranteeing to all men the right to worship God according to the dictates of their own conscience.

To those who are so solicitous about having the Bible and religious exercises in our public schools, it might here again be mentioned that prayer and the presence of the Bible do not necessarily imply the inculcating of the attributes of God and the tenets of Christ, as is evidenced by the fact, that the high priests, during the days of the Inquisition, prayerfully directed their gruesome work with Bible in hand.

Again, all authorities who ever wrote a paragraph on pedagogy, and all teachers worthy of the name who ever taught a day in any American public school, agree that the primary purpose of the public school is to build character—to drill into the life of the pupil those attributes which go to make up high grade citizenship; and they all agree that this character building can be done just as well or better, without the formal act of prayer and Bible reading.

The public school is maintained by money derived by law from all citizens alike. In any locality there may be people of the Catholic, the Hebrew or even the Mohammedan faith; to offer the Bible to people of such beliefs in an institution which they are paying their money to maintain, naturally engenders an atmosphere of contention, a thing inimical to the fostering of the tenets of Christ. Thus the thing sought, Bible reading, defeats its own aims.

XIX

MISSIONARY SOCIETIES

APROPOS of the flood of criticism being directed at the American public schools, it may be here stated that all those who have been observant, have doubtless taken note of the fact that missionary societies and other protestant organizations have of late manifested a tendency to join in these unfriendly comments. In view of the situation, it does seem really very much worth while that all groups of people interested in laudable effort should pause and carefully consider, at least the three following propositions:

(1) Are the attributes of God and the tenets of Christ, in any way, being overlooked in the training of our young people in the American public schools?

(2) The promoters of the Parochial school idea are ardently religious; with an intense fervor, believing their form of worship and their system of educational training for their youth to be superior to all others; therefore, sincerely wishing and earnestly hoping to perpetuate their forms and systems and bring them into ultimate supremacy. They would not be loyal to their creed and doctrine if this were not so.

(3) It is possible that this rivalry between the American public school system and the Parochial idea is bolstered up by a more intense spirit than appears on the surface. At any rate it is a contest between two opposing ideas. Under that inexorable law, the "Survival of the Fittest," every contest is a life and death grapple. When two opposing groups come into contest it is a common practice, one of the basic laws of strategy, for the leaders of one group, in the hope

of attaining victory, to put forth an effort to bring about dissension in the ranks of the opposing forces. Under this circumstance, might it not be well for us all, while ever on the alert standing staunchly for our own ideals, to earnestly ask the question whether some of this unfriendly criticism directed at the American public school, may not have its origin with the promoters of the Parochial idea, and, thus be propaganda designedly put out.

XX

THE PAROCHIAL SCHOOL

In many localities there may be found the Parochial school. Let no unkind word be said against this sectarian institution of learning. Let nothing be done to hinder its endeavors. Those who have fostered the Parochial school, and those who, as instructors, preside over its destiny, are imbued with the purest of motives. The constitution of our land guarantees to them the right to their form of worship, and their plan of giving religious instruction to their youth.

If the home life of the Father superintendent, whose residence is usually near by; if the attire of the teachers, and other formal customs—if these and all other things connected with the Parochial school are devoid of all artificiality, all dross—have in reality the quality of pure gold, and are not, as some believe, the last faint glimmerings of the Inquisitional days, then the Parochial school is of all others that superior agency for inculcating the attributes of God and the tenets of Christ. Standing thus upon a firm foundation, it will ultimately dominate all things.

Let no man fear, mock, or hamper. The American public school and the Parochial school exist side by side in this land. Each must stand upon its own merit. Regardless of motives; regardless of beliefs, these two institutions, the American Public school and the Parochial school must, like all other things, yield themselves to the operation of that universal, immutable law—The Survival of the Fittest.

It is felt that most Protestant clergymen agree with the members of the teaching profession that our American public schools, as now constituted, do function one hundred per. cent. in their endeavors to build into the lives of our children all the traits exemplified in high grade Christian character.

The public school is the state. It has taken ages, rivers of blood and countless treasure to separate the church from the state. The price paid justifies the belief that this separation will endure permanently. The nature of the criticism, now being directed at our public schools, seems to indicate, that the inclination on the part of the church to put its hand upon the state, still lingers.

Certainly, all good people earnestly desire to see the church endure permanently. Whether the church, Papal, or Protestant, may render more secure, or more precarious its permanency, by seeking in any way to formulate policies for the state, is a question, it would seem, which may well receive the serious consideration of all thoughtful persons.

XXI

EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

IN many localities there are citizens and even school board members who hold to the view that the time of pupils and the teaching force should not be taken up with basket ball, foot ball, and other athletic sports which are out side the regular course of study, that is extra—curricular; and especially do they contend that public school funds should not be used to support such activities.

Such persons might well be asked these questions:—What is education? For what purpose do our public schools exist? Should any feature or activity which is really worth while be regarded as extra-curricular?

With our present advanced standards in all fields, certainly, all must agree that our public schools exist for the purpose of affording our young people that training which will, to the highest possible degree, fit them to assume the duties of citizenship, when their school days are over.

It would require a good sized volume to enumerate and properly define all those attributes, which go to make up high grade citizenship. However, no individual can be said to have that preparation for citizenship, which will assure the fullest measure of success, until he has formed correct habits of thought and conduct; has come to delight in honest, earnest effort; has developed a keen sense of justice, with a high regard for law and constituted authority; has learned to cheerfully and courteously join with associates in any effort for the common good; has it well ground into his character to be self reliant, while devotedly loving truth and righteousness, and abhorring that which is base—in short,

has developed a well rounded mentality, and a perfectly poised morality in a clean vigorous body.

No one will decry the value of text books in the training of the minds and souls of our young people in the public schools; but, to emphasize the importance of knowledge gained from that source, and from other things strictly within the limits of a fixed curriculum, to the exclusion of outside features, is to take a position not in harmony with advanced thought in the field of education. Probably, no keener insight into this situation was ever exhibited, than that manifested by Ralph Waldo Emerson, when he said, "The parent sends his child to school for the teacher to educate, but the fact of the matter is that the other children educate him." Doubtless, Emerson meant to say that the text book part of the child's education is really a minor feature in the whole program, while, the development of a vigorous physique, and the bringing out of those attributes, just alluded to, is the chief function of our public schools.

If it be admitted, that the chief function of our public schools is character building, and the giving to our young people that training which will, in the highest degree, fit them to assume the duties of citizenship, then it necessarily follows, that any feature or activity, whether it be intra or extra-curricular, which contributes to that end, is worthy of the encouragement and support of all concerned, even if such support should mean quite substantial financial aid.

In places where a gymnasium has not been provided for in the construction of school buildings, it is quite possible, at least in some instances, that difficulties might confront boards of education, were an attempt made to put through, a program of basket ball and other in-door sports. In such localities, the necessity of renting and properly equipping a suitable building could easily present knotty problems. In the present condition of high taxes, patrons do not always cheerfully support boards of education in making expendi-

tures of money in such directions. Yet when the proposition is subjected to a searching analysis, what can there be in any school program, which will more effectually bring out those very necessary sterling attributes of character and qualities of body, than a well sponsored basket ball game, or other athletic sport?

If any one should put emphasis upon the proviso, just mentioned, that the athletics as well as other extra-curricular activities must be well sponsored, taking the ground that athletic coaches and other like instructors are expensive propositions, the reply would be, that no patron or tax payer ever objects to the employment of high salaried teachers, who can properly sponsor instruction in the three R's, the curricula branches in the grammar department, or even in the high schools. So the real pinch is to get all interested parties to see the point, that these extra-curricular features have a really worth while place in the public school programs.

Let us come back, then, to the question just propounded. What can properly sponsored basket ball games and other athletic sports do for our young people in the public schools? Can it be successfully argued, that the study of mathematics, the sciences, or the languages will go farther in quickening the initiative, the perception, the reason, the memory, and the other noble attributes of mind and soul, than clean basket ball games and other wholesome sports?

The curricular branches just alluded to certainly have their high place in any school program; but what can more effectually lead a youngster to put the proper rating upon the ego; to learn the game of give and take; to see the beauties of rectitude and square dealing; to come to more clearly appreciate the worth of righteous effort; to learn to adore a clean vigorous physical life—what can more effectually give valuable training along these lines than basket ball contests, or any other properly directed athletic activity?

Other valuable features attach to even a basket ball or foot ball game. There is the incentive to win the game by honest, earnest endeavor. There is the motive to make the proposition a success, financially, using recognized methods in judicious advertising, fixing proper admission charges, and the desirable experience acquired in an effort to attain these ends.

But, getting away from athletics, there is the school annual, a proposition in many schools, involving a financial undertaking of several hundred dollars. When a class sets itself to the task of putting out a school annual, all the mental and moral faculties of its members are actively brought into play to make the effort a literary, an artistic, and a financial success; all of which affords valuable experience and training which can be acquired in no other way.

It has been the aim here to definitely point out that any school board can well afford to make up any deficit occurring in the putting over of any well sponsored extra-curricular activity. Nevertheless, it should be strenuously urged, in all cases, that the utmost endeavor should always be put forth, by all concerned, to the end that every extra-curricular activity should finance itself. In fact a group of pupils engaged in the promotion of any such feature should be given to understand by the authorities, that the attaining of financial success by all honorable means is just about absolutely a *sine qua non*. Otherwise, the endeavor would be robbed of that which should be the goal in all laudable effort, viz, success.

XXII

OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS, THE GREATEST AMERICAN INSTITUTION

DESPITE adverse criticism, a searching analysis must lead any one to the conclusion, that, to-day, the greatest power for good, the greatest character builder in America, is the public school.

Yes, our system of public instruction is well nigh perfect in all its phases. The trouble is not with the system and the work it does, but with the fact that even in this free land the masses of the people have not yet come to fully appreciate its worth. As a result a very large per. cent. of children are allowed to drop out of school after finishing the sixth or seventh grades; thus these young folks do not pursue for a sufficient length of time this fine program designed for character building. Doubtless, many of these youths quit the pure associations of the school room because their natures are too much out of harmony with these uplifting things; they have the impelling impulse, which of course is natural, to get away from the pure surroundings and to place themselves in touch with the irregular, baser things of life with which their souls are more in harmony. As soon as this tendency to discontinue school attendance is discovered by parents, all influences possible should be brought to bear to counteract the impulse, for it is merely as natural a tendency as is the tendency of water to seek a lower level. Besides, it is just these young folks who most need it, who so strongly desire to get away from the ennobling influence of the school room.

Any unfriendly criticism of our system of education is harmful, because it weakens public interest and adds to the

tendency of young folks to quit school at an early age. If these criticisms are the outgrowth of ignorance, the condition is bad; if inspired by cunning design it is worse. But, whatever the motive which has inspired it, any unfriendly criticism of this, our greatest institution, the public school, deserves the closest inspection and analysis at the hands of all thoughtful, well meaning people.

Is it possible that our forefathers, of the time of Horace Mann, erred, when they launched the scheme to afford all our American youth, alike, an opportunity for a twelve year course of character building entirely free of charge?

In this land, of all things, that the most needed, is that every American citizen shall stand staunchly for a program which shall see to it that every child born beneath the Stars and Stripes shall, at the proper age, enter the public schools and there—not just a few of them, but every one of them—continue the work until the entire twelve year course is completed.

If such an institution as the American System of universal education had been in vogue throughout Europe a thousand years ago, there might have been some liars and thieves among the school children, but, candidly, does any one believe that such a thing as witchcraft, or the Spanish Inquisition could ever have come into existence? Yet there are folks who believe that, "MORALS, SOMEHOW, HAVE DROPPED OUT ALONG THE ROAD OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS."

The one thing which all the peoples of the world most earnestly desire is that there shall be war no more; that there shall come about the spirit of universal peace on earth and good will between men. Ministers of the gospel and others meet and pass resolutions looking toward the stopping of this frightful scourge, war. Some would place their hope in the League of Nations; others in the World Court; still others, in other devices. All these are laudable movements,

worthy of encouragement. How would it be, however, if all our rulers, all individuals of high influence throughout the world, now and for a hundred years, could become imbued with the spirit of Horace Mann to the extent that they would see to it that every child born into the world in every nation should be furnished, free of charge, a twelve-year course of instruction such as that in vogue in the American public schools?

If war is ever ended and universal peace shall come to stay, it will be, not because of resolutions; not because of good intentions; not because of signed contracts, but it will be because of universal education—universal character building at public expense.

Incidents in the history of the United States, extending back over the period of the last few generations, should afford food for thought for all our citizens. When, at Appomattox, in the spring of 1865, Lee, the vanquished, surrendered his sword to Grant, the same was graciously handed back to its owner. The Civil War being over, no punishment was meted out to those who had rebelled against their flag! but, on the contrary, the great Emancipator breathed forth the spirit of the victorious, but magnanimous North in these memorable words, "With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation's wounds; to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations."

In the Spanish-American War, after Admiral Cervera's fleet had gone down, Manila had fallen and Spain was lying helpless at our feet, when all which our adversary possessed could have been ours by the mere taking over of the same, out of the bigness of our heart we gave our unfortunate antagonist \$20,000,000.

When the Boxer Rebellion was over, while other inter-

ested nations were carefully looking after all which they considered due them, the real spirit which imbues the people of our land, on all occasions, came to the surface and the indemnities due us were remitted.

When all diplomacy had been taxed to the limit, and, in 1917, we were plunged into the great World War, every individual in this nation understood at the very outset, that we would exact not a single penny, not one square inch of territory; that all that we would ask at the close of the struggle would be the privilege of bringing back to their native shore the remains of our boys who might fall in the conflict.

Despite the opinions of those who are saying, "IT SEEMS THAT IT IS NOT THE BUSINESS OF THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS TO TEACH THE CHILD THE PLAIN AND SIMPLE MORALS OF EVERY DAY LIVING," a fair and searching analysis must lead any one to the conclusion that this high Christian spirit which always manifests itself when our American people are subjected to a crucial test owes its existence, primarily, to the fact that, for generations past, the attributes of God and the tenets of Christ have been diligently drilled into the lives of our children by that illustrious child of Horace Mann—THE AMERICAN PUBLIC SCHOOL.

Let every loyal American citizen stand staunchly for our system of free schools. For, in every community, whether that community be a group of sod shanties on the plains, or a metropolitan city, the most worth while enterprise is the public school. Upon that foundation, the public school, rests the destiny of this nation. Let that foundation be broad, sure and strong: then the waves of Bolshevism, anarchy and the other disintegrating forces will surge in vain against our shores, while our great democracy goes on into the ages of the future all the time stronger and more invincible.

But, that all may be well with us, it behooves patrons,

taxpayers, and boards of education, now and forever, to join in a program, which shall be guided, not by blear-eyed myopia, but, by keen far-sighted vision; sustained, not by paltry green coated pennies, but by the fullest measure of shining dollars, to the end, that, through the ages to come, the American public school equipment may be the very best possible; and, that there may ever be seen in the ranks of the teaching profession, that which is seen to-day, not palsied, stiff-jointed anaemia, but brainy, brawny, red-blooded activity of the highest type.

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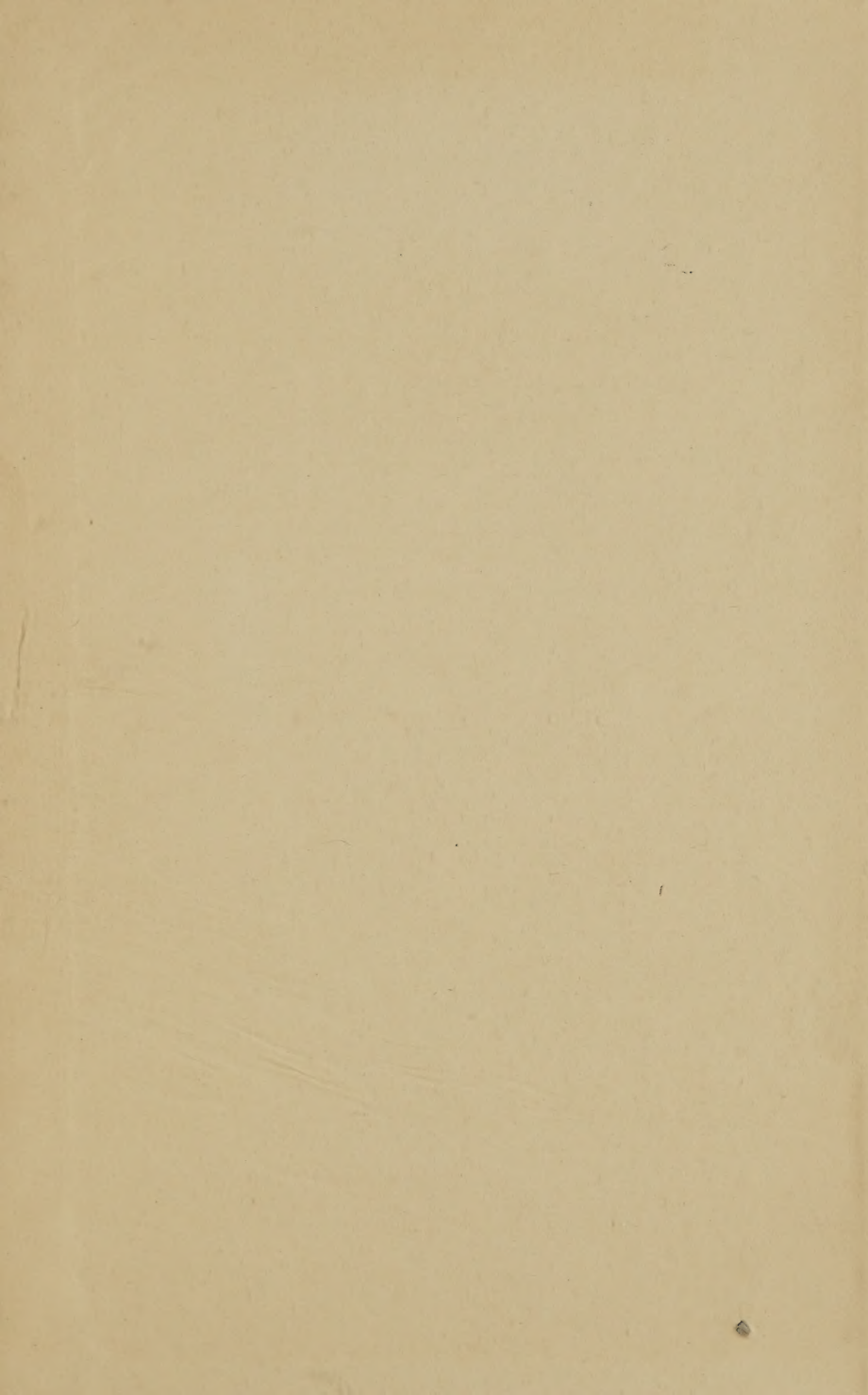
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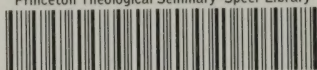
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